

Lessons of the Election

A SYMPOSIUM

Democracy vs. Plutocracy

By WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

Written for To-Morrow and The Commoner



THE questions for consideration at this time are, what lesson does the election teach? and what of the future? The defeat of Judge Parker should not be considered a personal one; he was a victim of unfavorable conditions and a mistaken party policy. His gold telegram, as it was called, while embarrassing to the Democrats of the West and South, was applauded by the Eastern press. He had the cordial endorsement of Mr. Cleveland, who certified that the party had returned to "safety and sanity;" he had

the support of the Democratic papers which bolted in 1896, and he also had the aid of nearly all of those who were prominent in the campaigns of 1896 and 1900, and yet his defeat is greater than the party suffered in either of those years.

It is unquestionable also that Judge Parker's defeat was not local but general—the returns from the Eastern states being as disappointing as those from the West. The re-organizers were in complete control of the party; the verdict against their plan was a unanimous one. Surely silver cannot be blamed for this defeat, for the campaign was run on a gold basis; and the trusts were not assailed as vigorously this year as they were four years ago. The result was due to the fact that the Democratic party attempted to be conservative in the presence of conditions which demand radical remedies. It sounded a partial retreat when it should have ordered a charge all along the line. In 1896 the line was drawn for the first time during the present generation between plutocracy and Democracy which alienated a large number of plutocratic Democrats, and drew to the Democratic party a large number of earnest advocates of reform whose attachment to these reforms is much stronger than attachment to any party name. The Republican party occupies the conservative position. To win the support of the plutocratic element of the country the Democratic party would have to become more plutocratic than the Republican and it could not do this without losing several times as many voters as that course would win. The Democratic party has nothing to gain by catering to organized and predatory wealth,

but it can strengthen itself by inviting the open and emphatic opposition of these elements.

The Southern Democrats were so alarmed by the race issue that they listened, rather reluctantly be it said to their credit, to the promises of success held out by those who had contributed to the defeat of the party in the two preceding campaigns. The experiment has been a costly one, and it is not likely to be repeated during the present generation. The Eastern Democrats were also deceived. They were led to believe that the magnates and monopolists who coerced the voters in 1896 and supplied an enormous campaign fund in both 1896 and 1900, would help the Democratic party if our party would be only less radical. The corporation press aided in this deception, and even the Republican papers professed an unselfish desire to help build up the Democratic party. The election has opened the eyes of hundreds of thousands of honest and well meaning Democrats who a few months ago favored a reorganization of the party. These men now see that they must either go into the Republican party or join with the Democrats of the West and South in making the Democratic party a positive, aggressive and progressive reform organization. There is no middle ground.

The writer did what he could to prevent the reorganization of the Democratic party; when he failed in this he did what he could to aid Parker and Davis in order to secure such reforms—and there were some vital ones—promised by their election. Now he will assist in organizing the campaign of 1908. It does not matter so much who the nominee may be.

The party must continue to protest against the large army and against the large navy, and to stand for the independence of the Filipinos, for imperialism adds the menace of militarism to the corrupting influence of commercialism and yet experience shows that however righteous the party's position on the subject, the injustice done to the Filipinos is not resented as it should be or as we resent a wrong done to ourselves.

The party must also maintain its position on the tariff question; it must renew its demand for an income tax; it must maintain its position in favor of bimetallism. But the trust question presents the most acute phase of the contest between democracy and plutocracy. The president virtually admits that the trusts contributed to his campaign fund, but he denies that they received any promises of aid or immunity. No one can answer the logic of Judge Parker's arraignment of trust contributions. The trusts are run on business principles. They do not subscribe millions of dollars to campaigns unless they are paying for favors already granted or purchasing favors for future delivery. The weakness of Judge Parker's position was that the charge was made at the close of the campaign when it was neutralized by a counter charge. The Democratic party must make its attack upon the trusts so vehement that no one will suspect of secret aid from

them. It will be to its advantage if it will begin the next campaign with an announcement that no trust contributions will be accepted and then prove its sincerity by giving the public access to its contribution list. "Death to every private monopoly," must be the slogan of the party in this question; any other position is a surrender.

The party must continue its defense of the interests of the wage-earners; it must protect them from the encroachments of capital. The people at large have an interest in the just settlement of labor controversies; for that reason they must insist upon remedial legislation in regard to hours and arbitration, and they must so limit the authority of the courts in contempt cases as to overthrow what is known as government by injunction. The party must continue its opposition to national banks of issue, and must insist upon divorcing the treasury department from Wall street. The party must continue its fight for the popular election of senators and for direct legislation wherever the principle can be applied. It must advance to the consideration of new questions as they arise.

We must have a government administered according to the Jeffersonian maxim of "Equal rights to all and special privileges to none." Hope and duty point the way. To doubt the success of our cause is to doubt the triumph of the right, for ours is and must be the cause of the masses. "With malice toward none and charity for all" let us begin the campaign of 1908; let us appeal to the moral sentiment of the country and arraign the policies of the Republican party before the bar of the public conscience.

The Populist View

By JAMES H. FERRISS

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THE vote cast in November for candidates who stood for something gives notice that the people are ready to move. In recent times they have not been so nearly of one opinion politically.

Our own party had been demoralized and discouraged by eight years of rivalry with the Democratic party. Our committee had a campaign fund of \$2,000. Under the circumstances, the radical parties obtained as many votes as could be reasonably estimated, for the voting habit, the homing instinct, loyalty to fellows or party is strong with patriotic people. And what can a national committee do with \$2,000? A million postage stamps cost \$20,000. The latter sum would not go any too far in making an impression upon 14,000,000 voters.

The Republican party obtained a great majority, but its leaders are not enthusiastic. There has been no general jollification, no fireworks. Do they not realize the party rests upon an uncertain foundation—that this trust issue is so large Mr. Roosevelt must take action quickly with Roosevelt strenuosity, or the party splits?

And why should it not? Like an invading army descending upon them in a night, the trust is here picketing the highways, raiding the kitchens, looting the treasures, and drafting the able-bodied. Its sentinels and spies are in the counting rooms and sanctuaries. Under pay and in uniform their servants crowd the halls of legislature, sit upon the bench, and guide the hand of the executive. Its stamps are upon the tea.

Private corporations, trusts, mergers, combines and pools have assumed the functions of government. They command, demand and enforce their decrees and tax the people out of all proportion compared to anything in kingcraft. In what respect are monarchies more tyrannical than the meat trust? or the lumber trust? or the harvester trust? George the Third did not tax the people with more severity, was no more despotic than King Rogers of the Standard Oil and his generals and colonels of life insurance, trust companies, banking trusts, gas, copper, electric roads and steam roads.

Americans are not a submissive people. True, there were signs and rumors of the invasion, but the development in this new science of robbery by law and combination came so rapidly, and

it was so unusual, the inhabitants were surprised in their sleep. But one surprise does not make a spring, and the people are not wholly in the possession of the trusts. Our knowledge of the various inhabitants of this soil, aboriginal, colonial and recent, is sufficient. Something will be done with these predatory gentlemen somehow and sometime. Shall the oppressors be overthrown at the earliest moment and with the most lasting effect is now the national issue.

In a general way humanity is divided between radicals and conservatives; the hopeful and trustful, the doubtful and suspicious. The first strives for progress and improvement, and here assemble the patriots. Here are found those noble souls ready to do and to die. La Follette belongs here, and Folk and Jerome, as much so as Watson, Bryan, Hearst, Tom Johnson, Lentz or St. John. In the other division gather the men who use party for their own purposes—exploiters, grafters, tax-eaters, place-hunters principally. A famous newspaper man denied that he had said “all of an opposing party were horse thieves,” but contended that he did say and still believed that all horse thieves were members of that party. All voters are not in their proper sphere today, but the situation is becoming more clearly defined. The adjustment will be more favorable, correct and proper in 1908. The Republican party is a party of general intelligence, courage and action, but every port and loophole is in possession of the Trust. The Democratic party contains many rough and ready Jacksonians, the noblest of the land, but what hope of progress is there in either party?

Should the radicals capture another Democratic convention, the conservative element (regular or bolting) would again defeat them. Round and round they go, submission and defeat, defeat and submission. Here is one instance where history is a faithful repeater. The party is merely a game pie prepared with remnants of many political dinners and a few rabbits. Here are found the most radical of radicals, the most conservative of conservatives, and all shading betwixt and between, contending with each other, neutralizing, defaming, slaughtering, but it is never one harmonious pie. Under the crust itself Democrats find their deadliest opponents, their own most bitter antagonists, and they obstruct, wrangle, and “do up” each other more fiercely than they assail the common enemy. Their individual sympathies are more largely with the Republicans and other outsiders than with their own wrangling pie-mates and insiders. Has it not been so forty years? Does not this internal violence increase with each succeeding year? Is there any prospect of a change to come?

Should any considerable number of Democrats support a radical platform, and give the public CONFIDENCE in some manner that they would remain true to the principles, come weal or woe, then other radicals in my opinion would join with them and enter into the work enthusiastically. The populists have ever

been kind and generous in this respect, but Mr. Bryan made a mistake at St. Louis, his greatest, and he must so feel it.

To overcome the Republican party another party will require a large number of Republican votes. Populists have so understood this at times, Democrats never. Those more obedient to gavel rule than their principles cannot pull voters very far.

Let the exploiters of mankind vote as many tickets as they may select. Consumers and producers, Populists, Bryan and Hearst Democrats, La Follette Republicans, Single Taxers, Prohibitionists, the reasonable Socialists, religious and well meaning people at least, should vote but one. The Single Taxer's remedy may not cure all the ills of government, but he is headed in the right direction. The Prohibitionist is right at least in home rule or local option. The Populist attacks the money trust, the king pin of all trusts, and his victory will impede no other progressive movement. Public ownership of public utilities is not all a Socialist demands, but it is a commencement. All agree on the referendum. Bryan, Watson, Hearst and St. John believe in the same platform, talk the same things word for word. They should work in harmony as against those who oppose progress.

If Bryan and Hearst alone had left the St. Louis convention, and no others from the hall, Parker's vote in size would have been much like the vote of Debs. If they come out this time, come now, the country will witness the great political revulsion of this age. If they do not come, Populists will continue the course, co-operating with all willing souls, persuading all to take up the pure Democracy of Jefferson, never again to affiliate with the Belmonts or Hills. Mr. Watson is now speaking from city to city systematically throughout Georgia, with the determination to have his state gubernatorially and congressionally in the Populist column by 1906.

The Socialist View

By WILLIAM MAILLY
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GIVEN certain social conditions under which class divisions and antagonisms are developed and encouraged, a growing pressure consequent upon the operation of inexorable economic laws, an increasingly intelligent and militant working class, and a Socialist movement becomes not only possible but imperative. All these accessories are present in the United States and a Socialist party, thoroughly organized in every avenue of political activity, is the natural consequence.

The Socialist party is the concrete expression of a definite purpose gripping itself upon the minds of men, filling their hearts with hope and thrilling their souls with the sense of the impending realization of an age-long dream, a dream which could not be realized until the economic development of society had justified it and an awakening working class compelled it.

Following fast upon the heels of capitalist adventure and exploitation wherever extended, reaching into every part of this country and the world, permeating all classes with its revolutionary message and significance, the Socialist party gathers to itself the most vital elements in each class, welds them together into a compact organization dominated and controlled primarily by the working class, and moves irresistibly toward the consummation of the world's freedom.

The work of this organization has only begun. It is not sufficient that its political machinery operates now in every state and territory; that political machinery must be so adjusted and perfected that the open or insidious attacks of its enemies cannot prevail against it. And the same dauntless energy and devotion characteristic of the working class and which persevered through the past years against innumerable obstacles and made it possible for a half million votes for Socialism to be registered this year, will meet every emergency, fill every demand and overcome all the opposition the future may bring, ensuring the final triumph of the cause within the life of the present generation.

The Socialist is the only practical idealist, just as the Socialist movement is the only practical one because it is based upon material facts which are at the basis of human life. The Socialist knows that agitation with tongue or pen will go for naught unless there is a political organization to crystallize what results from

agitation into definite form at the ballot box. He uses the weapons ready at hand, the most effective weapons to use, and through them will wrest the government from the ruling capitalist class and accomplish thereby the ownership by the people of the means upon which the people depend.

The Socialist vote is therefore more than a demand for change. It is a revolution in action. It is the change itself.